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Gosselin, Lucien oral history interview

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Interview with Lucien B. Gosselin by Mariah Pfeiffer

Interviewee

Gosselin, Lucien B.

Interviewer

Pfeiffer, Mariah

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Biographical Note

Lucien B. Gosselin was born on November 13, 1941 to Delia Hamel Gosselin and Arthur J. Gosselin. His mother was a homemaker and his father worked full time at the Pepperill Mill of Lewiston. He was the second youngest of nine children in his family. They lived on Blake Street in Lewiston in a working class, French-speaking neighborhood. His father passed away when he was ten. He attended the parochial schools St. Peter's Elementary and St. Dominic's High School. During high school and after graduation, he worked for the Lewiston newspapers, at first as a delivery boy, and then in the circulation and proofing departments. He then worked at Victor News from 1961 to 1963 before taking a position in the Lewiston city government as an assistant to the City Controller. He eventually worked his way to being the City Administrator under the new Lewiston City Charter of 1980. He served in this capacity until 1989. Gosselin was instrumental in lobbying for the founding of Lewiston-Auburn College. He graduated from Lewiston-Auburn College in 1991. He later received a master's degree from the Muskie School of Public Policy, and is pursuing his Ph.D. He worked for the Maine Development Foundation in the early 1990s, and in 1997 became president of the Lewiston Auburn Economic Growth Council (LAEGC), which is the position he held at the time of the interview.

Scope and Content Note

This interview covers Gosselin's career path; the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council: its history and its role in Lewiston-Auburn; economic development: the principle of economic development, income tax policy and politics, and Lewiston-

Auburn's current economic status; the Council's vision for economic development: its model, its interest in quality of life, the use of the mills, a conference center, its use of history, the role of the River, and Gosselin's stance towards poverty; Lewiston-Auburn's textile and shoe industries; and the health of the Androscoggin: electric power generation, signs and sources of pollution, public attitude towards the River, and environmental interventions.

ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Q: It's probably best to start with how you first got involved with the Growth Council, where your background comes from.

Lucien Gosselin: You really want to know that?

Q: Yes, I would love to know that.

LG: Okay, in the mid '70s I was president of a nonprofit development corporation called Lewiston Development Corp (*unintelligible*), which was founded in 1952. This city was really pretty static, there wasn't much growth going on, sort of recessionary, so the city decide to close, the city of Lewiston, decided to close their Accounting Development Office, we had a one person staff office at city City Corps. My official full time job was city controller, chief executive officer for the City of Lewiston, comparable to the city administration.

So in light of that, the issue was how we were going to deal with economic development in the future. So from the cities perspective I sort of inherited that responsibility, and so I did. I gathered a group of people who would served as presidents of Development Corporation over a years, and they were mostly pretty influential business people. So we brain stormed and came up with the idea of a joint organization, public-private partnership, where we would take economic development outside City Hall. And there's a rational for that, because a lot of private sector people don't like to deal with public arena because of the statutes on the book and their freedom of access, right to know.

Every action taken by the City Council needs to be in a public session. It's very difficult to do business in the public arena, particularly private business. So, by taking it outside of City Hall into a nonprofit development corporation, you basically skirted all of the statutes on the books, and the right to know, freedom of access, and all that kind of stuff, and you can do your business in private. And the business community appreciates that, because you also avoid the political influence, so to speak.

So we came up with the proposal to develop a joint public-private partnership called the Lewiston Economic Road (*sounds like*) Council, and it would be funded fifty-fifty, the city would contribute fifty percent of the overhead, and the Development Corporation didn't have a lot of money but had enough to say, we can get this thing started. The recommendation went well, the City Council adopted the recommendation, the Lewiston Development Corporation bought into it, we then went forward and created the organization, pretty much my brainchild, and we staffed it with a full time person and an administrative assistant, and set an office outside city hall. The first office was up on

Main Street, where Channel 6 is located. It turned out to be a very successful venture. The private sector developed a great deal of confidence in the concept of a (*unintelligible*) council, and for the next four or five years it did extremely well. And economic conditions were improving, so, those two things go hand and hand.

In 1981, Chip Morrison, who is currently president of the Chamber of Commerce, was my counterpart, he was city manager in Auburn, I was in Lewiston. We didn't have a city manager (*unintelligible*) in those days, I was the closest thing to a manager. So Chip came to me, along with the executive director of the Road (*sounds like*) Council, and, in effect, the Auburn City Council has more or less directed Chip to replicate the concept in Auburn. Auburn also has a nonprofit development corporation called Auburn Business Development Corp and City Government. And Chip, in his wisdom said, this is ridiculous, why should we duplicate what's working successfully in Lewiston. Any possibility to just join and make it a joint operation. On the surface it sounds easy to do, but economic development is sort of the bread and butter of city government, I mean what we do basically generates investment, increased property taxes, hopefully job creation, job retention.

But Chip thought it was a good idea, and then we went about selling it. It was a bit more difficult selling that than the first phase, because now we're dealing with two city managers, two city council, local influence in both cities, two development corporations, a lot of questions on how this would work, et cetera. Particularly things about parochialism and how are we going to protect one city from the other, in terms of economic development. We don't want businesses to be stolen from Auburn to Lewiston, or Lewiston to go to Auburn. That kind of stuff, a lot of touchy-feely issues.

But we got it done and in I think February of '81, we reorganized the group to Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council. And we just celebrated our 25th anniversary. We just had a celebration dinner at the Grey Athletic Building at Bates College, I don't know if you're familiar with that. So that's how the Growth Council came about. Again, started with just Lewiston for about five years, then Lewiston-Auburn now for twenty-five years.

Our main responsibility is to be a one-stop shop, so to speak, to represent the cities of Lewiston-Auburn for economic development, which includes to a large extent marketing the Twin Cities as a good place to locate a business, grow a business and be successful. We also do, sort of the main focus is economic development, and that's sort of applying business assistance from soup to nuts. That's simply answering a telephone call and saying, you know, when is the next trade show, or, when's the balloon festival, to a call saying, gee, we're from out of state, we are looking to expand our operation if we possibly could find a suitable site in Lewiston-Auburn, can you help us do that, and we'll pick up it up from there and work with the company and get them up and running.

Case in point, the best example I can give you is the Walmart distribution center that took us a year to negotiate, and that's a \$70 million project, roughly 900 thousand square feet, and we were competing with all six New England states. So, a simple phone call, in this case it started out with email, unknown client, just one of these blind emails, and you pick it up and run with it. And we go right through planning to ribbon cutting, and we work with them all the way through. So that's (*unintelligible*) technical assistance that we can provide.

And we do one more thing, we have what is called gap financing. We have about four million dollars available to assist businesses on a loan program as subordinated debt. I don't know if you're familiar with the term, but subordinated debt would be, for example, if you got a home equity loan, the bank has your primary first mortgage, you get a home equity loan, you basically get a second mortgage against your property. That's subordinated debt. We do this for area businesses based on their needs, and as they pay us back we lend it to new businesses.

Those are the three main focus of what we do, a staff with five full time person and a part time secretary, and the reason a part time secretary today is, everybody does their work off a computer, you don't need secretaries today for dictation and stuff like that, so we're able to do that all ourselves. And we have an independent board of directors, made up of twenty-four directors, fairly large, but most of them are senior business executives. Don Harward from Bates College was on the board for about six years, until he left. We don't have somebody from Bates now ,but Don was very active when he was president of Bates College.

The board is made up, there's approximately eight public officials on there, that includes the two mayors, two city managers, and two city councilors, one from each city, and the two development directors from each city. These constitute the public side of our business, the other sixteen people are all private sector people. And the organization is private sector driven, which means to say that the leadership of the organization has to come from the private sector. We don't want elected officials to take the lead here. And the rational for that, one, is there's always a sensitivity between Lewiston and Auburn, so that would complicate things if a mayor was sort of the chair of this board, vis á vis the other mayor; and the other issue is, we want to make sure the private sector feels and understands that this is a private sector organization, we're a private non profit development corporation. Even though we're quasi municipal, we're still private, chartered on the Title 13-B of the Maine statutes, that makes us a private nonprofit corporation, no different than Central Maine Medical Center or Saint Mary's Hospital, or any of these non profit organizations. So that's who we are, we've had a tremendous track record.

My background, by now you've probably picked up, I was city administrator in Lewiston, I retired from the city in 1989, I then went to work at Saint Mary's Hospital for a couple of years, and left there and went to work for the Maine Development Foundation for five

years, up in Augusta, which is a public policy think tank for the governor and the legislature. And then they twisted my arm to come back and run this organization in 1997, I've been here since. Credentials, I've got a masters in public policy, and half way through a Ph.D. in public policy. I haven't finished my Ph.D. yet. I don't know if I ever will.

Q: Now, to go back a little did you grow up here, or how did you end up in Lewiston?

LG: Life long resident of Lewiston, except for six months in military service. I grew up in downtown Lewiston, here on Blake Street.

Q: What made you decide to stay in Lewiston?

LG: I had no interest to leave. My career aspirations were really, throughout high school – actually, initially I wanted to be a funeral director, because I worked party time at a funeral home – but always wanted to be in public service, either work for the city or the state. And at twenty-one I went to work for the City of Lewiston, started as a clerk, and in a matter of about, well, that was '63, in about eight years I was city controller. And did not have my credentials then, I actually have my credentials after retiring. But I did reasonably well, and from controller I became city manager in – in 1979 we had a municipal referendum, we changed the charter from a mayor-council-commission form of government, a very unique form of government in Maine, anywhere, for that matter, to a full fledged city administrator/city manager form of government. And I became first city administrator and stayed there for ten years, and after twenty-seven years with the city I retired and I said I wanted to go do something else.

Q: How did you first want to get involved with the city and public service? Was there some watershed moment where you decided?

LG: No, not really, I was always indirectly involved, I was always interested in local politics, et cetera. I just had a career aspiration that at some point I would come work for the city, and actually, I think my original aspiration was probably to be a police officer, but somehow I had an offer to join the controller's office, there was a new position that was created, I was close to city officials and they said, why don't you apply for the job, I did, the rest is history.

Q: And where did the economic development interest, how did that evolve?

LG: Well, if you are in any way involved in managing a city, economic development is a pertinent piece, and there isn't a person that runs for mayor, or there isn't a city manager, that doesn't have an interest in economic development because, again, that's fundamentally your feeder system, it's your bread and butter of government. That's where you get your principle resources for doing city government, so, your tax base, that's what it's all about. So economic development is always a front burner item for

every city manager, every mayor, practically every legislator, they all support economic development. They don't always act accordingly, but at least they do express an interest in economic development.

Q: What's the difference between acting accordingly and expressing interest in economic development, how does that work?

LG: Will you restate that?

Q: Okay, when you're talking about the difference between expressing interest in economic development and not acting accordingly, what kind of things are you referring to?

LG: I'll be diplomatic. A lot of people will indicate that they're for economic development, but they don't act accordingly. Case in point, for example, for years, well over thirty years, anybody in municipal government, particularly those involved in economic development, would have argued the need to do away with personal property tax in Maine because it's a deterrent to economic development. Maine is one of the few states that taxes personal property. And particularly when you compare ourselves with New Hampshire, that doesn't have personal property tax, it is far more advantageous for a company to locate in New Hampshire.

Your legislators, governors, they all talk about the importance of economic development, but when it comes down to actually acting and doing away with personal property tax is one issue. It takes thirty years, so there's been an awful lot of rhetoric, but very little action. Even now, we would argue, for example, that the state of Maine has very few programs that can truly help with economic development. Yet, whether you're talking to the governor or to leadership, or to D.C. staff, they think they've got a great program. And when we deal with the clients, we run into the same old problem over and over again. We lack some of the tools to be effective in economic development.

For example, right now we are competing with a company that wants to put on a new line, a new production line, they need \$5 million and are looking for assistance. In this case we're competing with the state of Ohio, because they have a competing plant Ohio. There isn't a program that we have here in Maine that can compete with what the state of Ohio puts on the table, so we're probably going to lose that opportunity to Ohio. It's a manufacturing operation, about twenty jobs, \$5 million dollar investment, and we can't help them, we don't have the tools, the state doesn't have the tools.

And these are not new issues. We go through this all the time. Like I said, people talk a good game about economic development, but they don't act accordingly. And we need those tools, we need tax relief. It goes without saying, Maine, from whatever standard you want to look, is either the second or third highest taxed state in the

country. Again, it depends on the discipline we're talking about, but particularly when you're dealing with manufacturing, that becomes a tremendous burden, that we tax at that level.

Now, there are a lot of criteria for business selection. Taxation is one of them, and sometimes we can have tools that can level the playing field, such as tax increment financing, and some cases our gap program, depending on the size of the business. But it's pretty hard to overcome the tax issue. Maine wants to become a haven for retirees, yet we have one of the highest module tax rates in the country, for high paying jobs, or high salary individuals. So if you're a retiree and you're making a hundred thousand bucks a year and we are taxing you nine percent of your income, when you can go to Florida and get zero. For nine thousand bucks you can buy your condo in Florida any day of the week, at the expense of paying taxes in Maine.

So, those are issues. I mean, they're not new, I mean they've been discussed, and a whole bunch of issues like that. So you can speak a good game. You hear people say, let's make Maine a retirement community. Well, we'll make Maine a retirement community for poor people. You're not going to make it for rich people. If you're a business executive making, in Maine, let's say forty thousand bucks a year, with a threshold as low as forty or forty-two, you're at nine percent of your personal income, actually I think it is 8.9, I think. So if you're a business executive, and you're working for a big corporation and you're located in multi states, the likelihood that you're going to draw a salary from your Maine base business is highly unlikely. You may come here twice a week, three times a week, four times a week, but you're not going to draw your salary from Maine. It's as simple as that. Because at that module tax rate, it's a disincentive for anybody who makes money to be a resident of Maine.

And we see this over and over and over again. Anecdotally, I have a friend, self-employed, a salesman, a nice home over in New Hampshire, lived in Manchester, had purchased a summer home in Poland, Maine with this idea that at some point I'm going to sell my New Hampshire residence in Manchester and move to Maine permanently. Today, with computers, you can almost function from any place, as you well know, so it doesn't matter whether he lives in Manchester or lives in Poland, Maine. He takes orders on the computer site, and then sends it to their home office. We're having a beer, and we're talking about that. He says well, Lucien, I'm going to be a Maine resident, I'm selling my home in Manchester and moving to Poland, and I want to make Poland my prime residence.

And I had to be honest with him, I said, that's fine, but have you considered the tax implications of doing that? He said, what do you mean? I explained to him. I said, my advice, I'd love to have you come to Maine, love to be Maine resident, but my advice is you to talk to your tax accountant, your tax accountant. I was over there for a cocktail a couple weeks later, he says, I did and, he says, I am now a proud resident of the state of Florida. They have a summer home in Florida, and now a proud resident of the state

of Florida, still lives in Maine six months of the year, seven months of the year, but he doesn't pay taxes in Maine. His business is chartered in New Hampshire, so he's not paying income tax there.

Once you crank the numbers out, and we've had meetings with our own delegation, state delegation, we had certainly – there is the person running for governor doesn't understand these issues, legislative leadership. And I understand they're tough, complex issues to overcome, but nonetheless, when your goals are a contradiction to your actions, you really want people to come and retire in Maine, and enjoy the quality of life in Maine, build a residence in Maine, contribute their intellectual capital, then you've got to deal with the issue of taxation. People with money simply will not choose to make Maine their residence, unless they have an affinity to Maine, guys like myself, I won't leave, but I've got board members who all have summer homes in Florida right now, and the minute they retire, they're gone, they're gone, they're not going to be Maine residents anymore.

Q: So just to clarify a little bit, the taxation issue has to do with that fact it's pushing potential investors away from Maine, and also limiting the resources the Growth Council has to help that development?

LG: No, it doesn't do that to us. It just makes it that much more difficult for us to go attract new investment to Maine, both in terms of real estate investment and in terms of, how do I say, human capital. When business executives, who tend to be meticulous about punching the numbers, realize the impact they may have in establishing the residence of Maine and drawing the Maine salary. I mean, we talk about a hundred thousand bucks, some of these people make a million bucks a year. At a nine percent module tax rate, that's a huge impact on their income. When they can be in New Hampshire and have zero, or be in Florida and have zero.

A hundred thousand bucks is just a middle management person. So when you get a team of senior executives who look at the impact of moving their business to Maine, and fully understand the implications, usually it's a forgone conclusion that, if even if they do, for one reason or another, strategically or otherwise, locate their business in Maine, those people have the option are not going draw a salary from Maine. They're going to draw it from their home office or draw it from another state, if they have a business in another state. We see it all the time.

Q: What kind of change have you seen in Lewiston, from growing here up to today?

LG: You're kidding?

Q: No, I'm not kidding.

LG: Oh, well, I mean, I'm sixty-four years old so I've seen an awful lot of change. When I grew up in this community, it was basically a one industry town, buy and large. It

was basically manufacturing, blue collar manufacturing community. We had, right after World War II, I wasn't quite mature yet because I was born in '41, but let's say in the early '50s, we had I think something like twenty-two thousand jobs employed in manufacturing, basically in two industries, shoes and textile. And it was shortly after that, starting late '50s and early '60s, we started seeing an impact of globalization, where companies decided to outsource their production to Mexico, China, Japan, wherever, and we saw one shoe shop after another close down.

And for many, many of these people, that's all they ever did for work. I mean they'd go – the shoe business primarily works on pretty much a seasonal basis. This time of the year, a shoe shop probably would be getting orders for the spring sale for next year, but the big clients who were buying shoes would shop around. Auburn was the shoe capital of the world back in the '40s, so the big retailers who buy all this stuff, the wholesalers, would shop around. And sometimes the order would go to a Knapp Shoe, or another company, so shoe workers tended to move from one factory to another, whoever had the big orders.

But by and large, they were all in the shoe industry, and little by little, you know, a shoe shop would eventually find no orders coming, because they were now being outsourced. And companies that used to employ five or six hundred people would shrink and shrink and shrink. And these folks had no real alternate skill, because it's all they had done from high school, if they graduated from high school, they'd gone and work at the shoe shop, and did what their grandparents did and parents did, and that's make shoes. And the exact same story was true in the textile. The textile started here in the late 1700, early 1800s, brought here because of the hydraulic power of the river. And generation after generation – my four grandparents come from Augusta, Maine, and all four of them retired from Edwards Division of Bates Manufacturing. They had something like two hundred and nine years between four of them, all working for fifty years, and left the mill with a gold watch and Social Security, and worked minimum wage probably all their lives, they never got rich out of it, they just had a job.

And it's true with so many in Lewiston, people here who worked in the textile mill. And because you were basically involved with two major industries, you didn't have a lot of flexibility. Particularly the textile industry put a lot of pressure to relocate, particularly down South, argument being, closer to the raw material, cheap labor. They would always threaten to move out if the labor union couldn't see to the demands of management, so they always buckled under. My brother always worked at Bates Mill for forty-seven years, and he retired about ten years ago, maybe fifteen years ago now, he's eighty-seven, he was sixty-five, so he retired at sixty-five, about 15 years ago. And his salary was about seventeen thousand dollars a year. Worked his ass off, days like today with no air conditioning, et cetera. It was hard work, and he had one of the top paying jobs in the mill as a weaver.

Thousands of Lewiston-Auburn folks went through that. So from the late '50s to today,

we had to make up some twenty thousand jobs in alternate industries, between shoes and textile. All we have now is but a small remnant of the industry. I think right now if we had all of the shoe shops, shoe industry job and textile, direct or indirect, we'd probably have less than two thousand jobs, if that many, left. So we're talking about transition. It wasn't just a transition in industry, but job training. And there was a period of time when we saw a big, large out migration of people, particularly in the early to mid '60s, when a mill would lay off a thousand people, without any hope of calling you back. I mean, these people simply had no jobs to go to. And many of the long time Lewiston residents, just to survive, would go where the jobs were.

And for a good number of our people, they moved to Hartford, Connecticut, to go to work for Pratt and Whitney, which was still a fairly growing company making aircrafts, et cetera. So if you go just in the Hartford area, the Greater Hartford area, you'll find hundreds, or thousands of people that emigrated there from Lewiston-Auburn, simply because one family would go down there and they'd say, come on down, we got jobs for you. You know, Pratt and Whitney was just growing and growing, and Hartford was just a growing center. And if not Pratt and Whitney, then some other business. So we saw our population shrink from about 42,000 in peak to now a little over 35,000. And we're just starting to see in-migration and growth in this area now for, oh, close to (*unintelligible*).

But from the mid '60s to where we find ourselves today, this huge transition and it came ever so slowly. I mean, it wasn't just a negative impact occurred over a fairly short period of time. Rebuilding took an awful long time, and its been one little business after another, one growth business after another, one import business. What brought them here, the next question, the obvious: ample supply of laborers, ample supply of cheap laborers, good bench workers, we call them bench workers, a person who make things, variety of skills. Even though many of them did not have a lot of skills, in the textile industry, shoe industry, there are a number of disciplines, I mean they don't all make shoes, some fix machines, some weld, some run lathes and the whole bit, a whole assortment of jobs. So little by little, companies saw niches of the unemployment base here, and a fairly large number, so you had the supply factor. The demand was that somebody from away needed low cost laborers, opportunities to locate a business here. So little by little, we had the opportunity to bring businesses to this area, (*unintelligible*), because we had a supply of cheap labor, hard workers, and et cetera.

Not by design, by any stretch of the imagination, but by luck. Over that period of about forty years, we were able to attract a variety of businesses in this area, so they weren't all the same type of businesses. We have metal burning businesses, we have plastic businesses, we have transportation, we have food, health care, academic. I mean, when I grew up here, through 1975 roughly, I would say late 60s, at Bates College. And then when we created what was then called Central Maine Technical College, which is the community college now, which was basically a voc type program, that's all we had for higher education. Today, we have five universities, we have six thousand

people attending college today in Lewiston-Auburn, compared to probably, pre1975, or at least the Technical College, would have been Bates College, in those days about nine hundred to a thousand students. We now have six thousand attending college in Lewiston-Auburn.

Retraining, building new skills, variety of jobs, need for higher education all played a role. it didn't all happen, it wasn't a grand plan, it's just seizing the moment, seizing the opportunity, pricing. So you know it brought in companies like Tam Bran, privately owned company, today is owned by Proctor and Gamble, at the time it was private owned. Again, they were looking for a supply of labor, a good location, so now they employ five hundred people. Brought in GE, brought in Fiber Tech, we brought in International Paper. International Paper basically, they make corrugated cardboard, printed to specifications, so that if you receive something in a box in a print, it's possible it's made right in Auburn, Maine. Brought in Geiger Brothers in 1953 or '54, from New Jersey, a huge company here in Lewiston, they make specialty products. When they first came here, they were a printer, but now if it can be embossed or printed, they can make just about anything from plastic cups, whatever, and they're huge. They came from New Jersey. They escaped the labor situation and the awful business environment in New Jersey to here, and they made this their home.

You go on and on and on, and you look at all the major businesses, our top businesses are probably less than forty years old. As opposed to the textile mills, that have been here a hundred and twenty-five years. Healthcare just grew exponentially here, they are now a top employment sector, over six thousand people work in healthcare today, in Lewiston-Auburn, and some of those make \$400,000 a year, particularly the cardiovascular area. So the transition we've seen here so slowly has been diversification, increase in skill, dexterity as well as academic skills, we've retrained a huge work force. The crossroad for us I think is to take it to the next level. Lewiston-Auburn has probably got the best economic mix that it's ever seen since they've been communities in 1763, or thereabouts. Except for healthcare, there is no significant predominant industry. We don't have a textile industry, that if textile goes sour, we don't have thousands of people that are on the dole. We don't have auto industry where we have thousands of people in -

Q: So, is that a good thing?

LG: Oh, it's a good thing for us, because now, the last recessionary period, we hardly felt it here. Yes, some businesses probably had some slow down, but they don't employ enough people to make an impact. You go to Lewiston-Auburn, you have, what, forty thousand, forty-four thousand people that work there, so that no one employs enough people in one singular industry to make an impact. I suppose if you said, well, what about healthcare. Yeah, potentially healthcare, but the likelihood that healthcare would go through cyclical changes, like impact by auto industry, or goods, purchasing industry or whatever, it's different. I mean, it's a basically a social type

industry.

And so outside of them, our largest employer is about five, six hundred people. So even if that company shut down entirely, it would leave an impact, but I mean it's nowhere near the kind of impact when we laid off a thousand textile workers all at once, with no other jobs to go to. And the diversity of skills that have evolved over these forty years is phenomenal, we've got just about every skill you need. The difficulty on the employment side here is that there's some specialty jobs. I mean, if you're looking for an electronic engineer or a biotech engineer, it might be difficult, you might have to go out of state to find one. But outside of that, by and large, most companies eventually find the people they need. Big shift, it's a big sea change for us.

Q: You mentioned that you were trying to get to the next level. Is there a model for the development of Lewiston, or is it sort of being pieced together? How does that work?

LG: There is no model. It's sort of like, seize the opportunities as they come. The vision we have for us is to be a center of arts, culture, education and manufacturing. And we've developed all of those incrementally so that it's nothing really dominant, it's nothing that sort of overpowers everything else, but we want to make sure that as we grow this community that we grow it in a balanced approach. And we would like Lewiston-Auburn to become more of a destination in our community, and the piece for us that's missing, and we want to compete in our own environment here in Maine, we're not a coastal community, we're not going to get people that are drawn because of the ocean. I know they aren't coming here because of the Androscoggin River, at least I don't think.

Our draw historically has been Bates College, and because folks like you come to school here, your parents come to visit, some stay, et cetera, but historically that has been our biggest draw. And in the scheme of things, it's not a lot, relatively speaking. And even your parent weekend might draw six to seven hundred people, but it's a flash in the pan. So in recent years, in the last decade or so, you've created sort of quality of life issues, such as your festivals. You wind up at your Franco American festival, which unfortunately is striking again, your balloon festival, your Liberty festival, your dance festival at Bates College. All of these things have drawn people to the community, in some cases as many as ten-, fifteen, twenty-thousand people we look to the community now to draw.

The transformation we're trying to create is to make this a more permanent kind of diet for the community, not just be a flash in the pan thing, three days of balloon festival, you can draw fifty thousand people, you know, but not much wealth is created from that. So our plan is to convert Mill Five, which is the big sawtooth mill, which is 375,000 square feet – we've already got some design work done on it, substantial design work done – and develop that into a fairly large scale conference/convention center. It would be the

largest north of Boston. It's probably a \$50 million venture, and that's what's holding us up, is how do we come up with \$50 million. Not pocket change.

And the facility is large enough not only to do a conference/convention center with somewhere around 80,000 square foot of exhibition space, which would be, again, the largest north of Boston, but with full conference capability, full food support services. And we still have enough room in the facility to either have an indoor mall, or an athletic facility, and we have plans for both. We could develop out of that, with some modification, a 7500 square foot, or 7500 seating facility in there, which is about the size of the Civic Center in Portland, in one building. If you split the building in half, this side here would be your athletic facility, which you could have hockey, basketball, shows, all kinds of events, the other half would be a conference facility, and with the food service center in the middle, and we have plans all drawn out.

One issue at this point, even poorly run, that could generate, in our estimate, somewhere around between two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand people in the community. So, much of our plans for this downtown revitalization is based on supply and demand kind thing. Right now, there isn't a lot of demand for businesses to locate there and build boutiques and shops, et cetera, because there isn't a steady diet of patrons. If we could pull this off, two to three hundred thousand people a year to a facility like that, on a steady diet for every week, you ought to be able to be able get at least two or three rentals a week, anywhere from between five hundred people in attendance to a couple thousand, sometimes your big programs such as your Democratic conventions, state municipal conventions, et cetera, those will easily drawing three, four thousand people. You put that kind of traffic on the street, and those empty stores are just going to fill up, those empty buildings are just going to fill up. And then we can bring in a higher level of culture, in terms of shows that currently you have to either go to Portland or Manchester or New Hampshire to enjoy. We just went to see the American Idols down at the (*unintelligible*) -

End of Side A
Side B

LG: These things take time. They take five, ten years to plan. And a lot. I mean, we're on the edge, we've got the plans, we know what we want, we're pretty crystal clear on what we want to achieve, we've got some major investments waiting to happen. Quite frankly, the conference/convention center is a critical piece, we're just trying to figure out how to do this without putting the burden on the taxpayer, realizing the taxes, real estate taxes are already fairly high. Everybody's concerned about bringing additional burden on the taxpayer.

Q: What do you see as role of the history of Lewiston, or its buildings its industry in the future of its development.

LG: That's pretty broad. Let me say to start with, that these historic buildings, and they are historic buildings, the Libby site, with the Island Point Project, that's shaping up very nicely. With a little bit of luck, we may have a formal announcement on that shortly, with a multi million dollar investment, spills over into the Bates Mill, which is also a historic building. If we're able to pull some of that off. I mean, we're getting some interest, it's not what we want. All of that, to a large extent, would not happen were it not for the river, the falls, and much of what's happened here, as you well know, from a historical perspective, is not different than coastal communities. When people built on the river, they used to build the back of the house against the river and the front of the house away, and it used to be low income people because land was very cheap, because people with money could afford the nice home. The last place in the world they wanted to be was next to the river because of the stench, and the industrious nature of how the river was being used in those days.

The same is true with waterfronts. You look at the Portland waterfront, when Portland, fifty, seventy-five years ago, everything on waterfront was cheaper housing, cheap buildings, industrial type buildings. Nobody with money wanted to build on the waterfront for the same reason, because it stunk, and you had all this commercial activity going on. As things have gotten cleaned up, as people have a better sense of how to use these resources, and the Androscoggin being one, and I used to live on Blake Street, a couple streets up, and you could smell the river and in the summer and you had to close your window, not matter how hot it got. The paint would peel off our house. I can attest to that, I've seen it myself.

Now you don't have those situations, and people now are sort of embracing the river. And all of these projects, this redirection, the hotel, the Hilton Garden Hotel in Auburn, the (*unintelligible*), it would be the Highland Point Project, the Conference Center, fifty years ago if somebody said you're going to use the Bates Mill for a conference center, they'd think you're nuts. To think you were going to build condos on the river in Lewiston or in Auburn, they'd say you're nuts. Nobody would ever live there. Well, it's going to happen, you're going to see it before you graduate from Bates College. Tremendous shift, because of almost thirty-five to forty years of efforts to clean Androscoggin. It's not perfect, but for some of us who have been at least residents in this area during those forty years, the improvements are significant, I mean it's a sea change. You can literally walk the River Walk in the dead summer and not feel like, God, what am I doing here? It's actually a pleasant walk, and people do it.

So, when you look at these facilities and the work we're doing at Bates Mill, and we have, hopefully other mills are going to be rehabbed as well. Most of them right now are occupied. There are not a lot of vacancies in the Hill Mill, in the Continental Mill, in West Point Pepperil, those mills would still be used unfortunately for lower-end use than they otherwise could be. But the Bates Mill, with this substantial rehab, those are jobs of the future. What's being done at Bates Mill, those mills are being rehabbed for another fifty to a hundred years, and they're bringing in better paying jobs, higher quality

jobs, and we've got almost fourteen hundred people working in Bates Mill now, and just fifteen years ago we were down to a hundred. So it's certainly gone the other way.

The community's changing, you're going to see more and more of the older buildings being torn down, replaced with new, modern buildings. I don't know if you're familiar with what's going on in the Maple Street area, with that Community Concept project there, but hundreds of apartment units have been torn down and rebuilt into small condos, very nice, very attractive. One of the things that Lewiston has to be careful about is this whole issue of subsidized housing. When I left as city manager we had almost eighteen hundred units of subsidized housing, and I suspect they've added some since then. The danger with that, and I don't know how you say that, I'm certainly not anti-assistance, but it's like everything else, if you do too much of one, it becomes a problem and not enough of the other. You've got to have a balance. And if you create too many opportunities such as that, then the ability to change this community for the better is going to get progressively more difficult, because you're going to end up with an urban core of poor people.

I mean, public policy in this state has already created that environment. My suggestion is, don't perpetuate it, it's bad. If you take your core area of the city and the only people who live there are poor people, low income people, then how do you expect to change that community? I mean, it's just not going to happen. You got have a mix, and you got to have some dispersion in the community. Don't put them all in one little neighborhood. And there's been a tendency to do that. So, there's a lot to do.

Q: Just to go back a little bit, I wonder if you could speak about your experience with the river growing up, what kind of things you remember from it, just to kind of get a sense of what it was like on Blake Street, to being in the area.

LG: Well, as I said earlier, as far back as I can remember, when I was fairly young and I was familiar the river, it was awful. In the dead of summer, particularly in the dry weather, as you know, the Androscoggin is probably the most managed river waterway in the country, because of all the generation, electric generation all the way through to the hydro generation, and so in dry weather they pond all the water behind these dams, so they only emit a regime of water so that – I call it pimping – so that, from the head waters up in Errol, New Hampshire, they allow just so much flow so that every generating station along the river gets its allocation of water to generate it's need for electricity all the way down to Brunswick. So that when you have a drought period where there's no rain, all that water is in ponds and released only in increments enough to generate electricity. So the river bedding actually would all but dry up.

And then, as you well know, prior to 1965 and prior Ed Musky and environmental laws, the river was a cesspool. I mean, all of the of raw sewage of everybody upstream and downstream from us, including Lewiston-Auburn, all of the (*unintelligible*) went directly in the river. So the common understanding in those days was that the solution to

pollution is dilution. I mean, simply, the rationale was that you throw it in the river, when it rains it will wash it down to the ocean, and the ocean is so big that it'll thin it out. Well, you do this for generation after generation, and after a while it starts to add up.

So that you can imagine, if you've ever seen, for example, literally a cesspool, how it can stink. Well, imagine 40,000 residents of Lewiston, and another 25,000 residents of Auburn putting all of their sewage into the river, including all your industrial sewage, wasn't pleasant. Again, Ed Muskie, being a champion of environmental laws in this country, and Maine taking a fairly significant leadership role, with its own mini environmental laws – I say mini, (*unintelligible*) – and Lewiston-Auburn were two of the first communities in the state to water treatment facilities, a secondary treatment plant, not cheap, which required installing collection systems the entire length of the river so that all of the drains would connect to a collector system, the collector system would take it down the river.

In those days, the standards allowed for CSOs, Combined Sewer Overflows, the rationale being that we don't need to treat storm water, and still, philosophically, that when you have storm water mixed with your sanitary sewage, that the dilution would be so significant that the pollution would be so insignificant, i.e., solution to pollution is dilution. So they allowed CSOs, which is now being banned. So you still had some effluent going directly into the river, but yes, into a diluted form as a proportion of the mass.

So, the treatment plant began the process. It took years for the river to clean up. It wasn't like you stop discharges today, it's done. You still had a lot of discharges upriver, particularly from your paper mills, and there basically is a, in their case it was sewage as much as chemicals that they were dumping in the river, and causing certainly biological harm. So all of those things over forty years have come a long ways. And of course, when you were the only community doing it and everybody upriver from you sent their stuff to you, and we sent our stuff down river, so it took a good number, as much as twenty years for almost everybody to comply. But little by little, you saw the improvement.

You could have stood on the Longley Bridge and looked at the falls, after a rain fall, and that water below the falls was just about as dirty brown as you could get. And when things settled, you had a foam about that big high, and the stench coming. Today, you can go there and watch it, and it's pleasant. It was not in those days, you would never have done it as a matter of choice, you would have done it as a matter of criticism or whatever.

So, it's come a long, long ways, to a point now where you can actually fish, as long you don't eat too many fish from the river. If you go to Gulf Island Dam, almost every day in the summer you will see people on the dam, fishing at the (*unintelligible*) Pool, or Pond. And the reason for that is that there is a good number of fish with a high level of

mercury, so the amount of fish you eat from the river should be a limited quantity, and I don't know what the standards are. But precaution says, eat as little as you need to. If you just want to fish for enjoyment, it's great fishing.

Q: When did you start to notice people's attitudes changing towards the river?

LG: Big push was really, I would say, my years of city government up through at least – I retired in 1989 – I would say up through mid to late '80s, people started to really push to continue to clean up the river. Up to that point in time, I'm going to say, from the 1960s to '80s, I mean, they were aware, there was some advocacy to clean the river up, advocacy to make better use of the river, improve water quality, make it acceptable for boating. Prior to '60, you put your boat in the river and you came back, the first thing you needed to do was clean it, literally. You wouldn't want to just bring it to your garage, it would stink up the whole place.

I'd say, my recollection is mid '80s to late '80s, people started to really see improvements taking place, and more or less advocate both locally and to legislature for greater cleanup. And by then, many of the cities and towns along the river had been compelled by law to build treatment facilities, so the amount of raw sewage going in the river had diminished quite a bit. But we still had industrial piece that, through their political influence, were able to postpone implementation. But little by little, they did, and it was not an inexpensive – I mean, for the paper mill to spend three, four million dollars to improve things is not unusual. And of course, their argument was always, well, it will affect the quality of our paper, because we had to find alternate chemicals and compounds to continue making quality of paper.

I don't know how they make paper, but that was a big argument, it still is. So, starting in the late '80s and on, particularly in the '90s, advocacy groups sprung all over the place for continued improvements to the quality of the Androscoggin, and other rivers in Maine. And they made some major headway, major headway. And in part, the attitude of people about the river also changed, you know, we started to see boats on the river, more fishing, people started to buy land abutting the river. Which again, in the '60s, nobody would buy, and if you wanted to buy it you could probably get it for a song. So it's come a long ways.

Q: On a more personal level, how has your attitude specifically changed towards the river, or has it?

LG: Well, my attitude today is that the river has become an asset to the twin cities. Clearly, up to 1980s, particularly in the '60s with I just got involved in government, *and* being compelled to do water sewage, separation from storm water, building the interceptors and treatment plant, the river at that point was utilitarian, it was basically the customary cesspool used, and would continue to be so because the treatment plant would still basically dump in the river. But technology has created environments that,

what the treatment plant does put in the river is considerably improved. It's not perfect. I wouldn't go out there and get a cup of water (*unintelligible*), but they tell me we could. I wouldn't do it. But nonetheless, it's still a utilitarian approach.

Today, no question that most public officials look at the river as a community asset, and will continue to become more and more of a community asset. No question about it. You know, it attracted Gritty's in Auburn, and helped them build a deck so you can literally sit there and overlook the river. And it attracted the Hilton Gardens, and I've had clients, when I was here and people stayed there, particularly in the spring and fall when the falls are flowing, I mean, they think it's just the greatest thing in the world, to just sit there and watch the falls. It's come a long ways, and will continue to be.

Their efforts, they've talked about it for years, nobody has got the resources to make it happen, but they'd like to light up the falls, and various schemes have been looked at. I've got some schemes here. The problem is that the Androscoggin discharges so much water in the spring, after winter, for example, at peak flow it will probably go up to 120,000 cubic feet per second, so the water really cascades right over the falls. And when we looked at any form of lighting scheme, whether you use laser where you could color it up with reds and blues and whites and orange and yellows, it would require an infrastructure across the river, and it's expensive because of distance and so on. And I know the Lewiston-Auburn Rotary Club, matter of fact your Business Manager [*sic*: Budget Manager], or accountant, at Bates College, was the president, Ed Plourde, and he had a scheme to raise money to begin the process of lighting the river. The Chamber of Commerce had done same thing.

The problem is, it's going to be very expensive to do, probably easily a half a million dollars. And then, there's the power, the electric power that you're going to have to pay to do it. What Ed wanted to do is a computerized system, whereby using auto jets, and using lasers, you could create a variety of activity at the falls, even in dry weather flow. And we had engineers actually look at a fountain, in the base of the falls, so that you could literally do like a fleur de lis. But if you look at the level along the bridge, the level of the fall, I mean that stuff's got to shoot about seventy feet up in the air. The pumps and the motors it would take to do that are huge, it would require a huge water supply, and a huge electric supply, for it to be noticeable. I mean, it's the scale of things here, it's doable, it's just a question of money.

What the engineers basically said is, you can't do it in the river. Because when you start getting 90,000 cubic feet per second, or 100,000 cubic feet per second, they don't know how you could anchor the thing down. It would wash away. I mean, a pound of pressure, the velocity would be so huge, no matter what you do, it would probably eventually (*unintelligible*). So they pretty much dismissed that, which leaves doing something on either side of the river. They've tried schemes under the bridge, with lights under the bridge. But in order to do something for the summer, we really need to put some sort of pipe right in the fall, with computerized control heads, something that

you could actually anchor in the falls, in the ledge. And you could literally replicate the falls even in dry weather flow. Again, it would be expensive, it's doable, it's just a question of money.

So, would we be doing that. We think that, one, it's an attraction, and two, that the river is pristine enough that people would find it a draw to come and see this kind of show. It's not dead, it's just a question of money. I mean, the ideas are there. It's just whether or not we can pull it off. So, we've come a long ways, upriver. The attitude towards the river is now clearly an asset. I mean, people see the river as a community asset, and over time I think you're going to see more and more vacant land, or built up land along the river, being acquired for higher end use. I won't say our future is in the river, but (*unintelligible*).

Q: Well, I think that is all I had as far as questions for the moment. Is there anything that you feel that I've left out and you are burning to tell me, still?

LG: Well, my usual response to something like this is, now that you're off duty, ask a question you never dared ask before. So, I don't know. You've certainly covered an awful lot. And I think the attitude that I'm sharing about Lewiston-Auburn, I think if you went down to Lisbon, and you went upriver obviously, particularly Berlin, New Hampshire, and others, Rumford, I think you'd find that attitude, looking at the river as an asset now is probably the prevailing attitude.

Q: Yes, I've done a little talking with people up in those areas, and it seems to be pretty universal. Especially when I was up in Berlin, as their mill had just shut down, they were looking for opportunities for economic development.

LG: The tradeoff on the environmental side is the high demand for renewable energy. The utilitarian value of the Androscoggin, and to some extent, and I am not a biological engineer, and the negative impact that has on living organisms in the river, i.e., the issue of dissolved oxygen and so on. And again, I'm not an expert. My sense is that hydro electrical energy does not in itself, and I am speaking out of school here, I think that it's not in itself degrade the river in terms of the environmental issues, such as raw sewage going into the river, or chemicals, et cetera. Because fundamentally, a hydroelectric generation plant is not more than water going through a turbine and coming out at the other end. But it certainly does impact some of the organisms as a result of that generation, and I know there's concern on it on the environmental side.

But view that issue as different. The clean up of the river, which is really getting rid of the cesspool to something more pristine. So, particularly the Androscoggin more so than the other rivers in Maine, because it has the highest horsepower capacity than any other river in Maine, as I understand it, because of the drop at its head waters to the Atlantic. Just here in Lewiston-Auburn, there's a 56 foot drop (*unintelligible*), and that's why CMP, the water power company, built the Charles Monty Hydro facility, which I

negotiated, actually. It's a 26 megawatt facility, which is huge,. It's probably enough to provide most of the electricity in Lewiston-Auburn. (*Unintelligible*), we'll have hydro electric power. And that was a \$50,000 million investment. And I know that there are some environmental concerns with even those things, but I view those type of utilitarian benefits different than using it for logging and using it for a cesspool. And I think there's a huge difference between those two uses.

Q: I think that's great, thank you very much.

LG: You're welcome.

End of Interview

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